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TAGS: PGOV PREL MK

SUBJECT: MACEDONIAN MOI: "POLICE NOT INVOLVED IN CAMPAIGN-RELATED INCIDENTS"

REF: SKOPJE 594

Classified By: Poloff Katrina Mosser for reasons 1.5(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) The Ambassador and post's DOJ ICITAP representative met with Minister of Interior Mihajlovski on June 22 to discuss the recent campaign-related incidents and accusations by political party leaders that the police have been involved in or have provoked the incidents (reftel). The Ambassador emphasized our continued support for the Ministry of Interior (MOI) in all legitimate police actions to protect property and persons, regardless of attacks on the MOI by the media. At the same time, the Ambassador stressed the need to investigate any credible accusations of police involvement in the incidents, and to take action against suspected perpetrators as appropriate.

¶2. (C) Mihajlovski said he had issued a written order to all law enforcement authorities strictly forbidding involvement in political party activities, and that any official who violated the order would be "let go." According to Mihajlovski, similar accusations by political parties and the media of police bias in such incidents had occurred in previous elections. Such accusations only served to undermine the credibility of the police and erode citizens' support. In addition, Mihajlovski said, activists from several political parties were putting increasing pressure on police officers by suggesting they could lose their jobs under a new government if they failed to support their party.

(NOTE: The patronage system continues to plague good governance in Macedonia, and the government is pursuing ongoing public administration reforms that would create a professional civil service to address the problem. END NOTE.) Mihajlovski reported that, during the 2005 municipal elections, credible accusations of police participation in political activities resulted in the firing of those officials who were implicated. At present, police are patrolling areas affected by the recent incidents, and the MOI has established regional centers to monitor events.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: All indications are that the majority of MOI officers are conducting themselves in a professional and non-partisan manner in dealing with campaign-related incidents. There is no/no evidence of systemic partisan bias by police. Embassy officials will remain in close contact with the MOI through the election period. According to

post's ICITAP representative, Mihajlovski has been under intense political pressure in recent days and appeared to be showing the effects ("shell-shocked") in his demeanor - in that sense, the reiteration of USG support for appropriate law enforcement was helpful and well-timed.

MILOVANOVIC